地域研究, 第12卷 第2號
1996年 12月 pp.69~78

# Emerging Issues of Urban Management and Planning for Seoul*

Won-Yong Kwon
Seoul City University

## 1. INTRODUCTION*

One of the world's dynamic mega-cities, Seoul celebrated her 600th anniversary as a traditional government seat of Korea in 1994. According to the 1990 census report, the population of Seoul already reached more than 10 million which occupies now almost a quarter of the national total. Metropolitanization of Seoul has been a companion of the rapid national economic development last three decades, despite the government's official policies to counteract the persistent concentration of population.

At present, Seoul is faced with two trends which affect significantly urban management and planning; one is globalization of the economy, and the other is humanization of urban development. Streamlining of land use control is under way to promote the national competitive advantage and even more extensive deregulation measures are taken so as to induce foreign capital. The worship of GNP as synonymous with "progress" has been reinforced by "the growth is good" ideology. But people's level of aspiration and ecological concerns shifts with rising income from the quantity of life to the quality of life.

On a global scale, there are a wide range of possible transitions: from industrial to postindustrial, from material flows to information flows, from public welfare to privatism, and from mono-centric to poly-centric urban spatial structure (Kivell, 1993: 185). Planners should not only analyze carefully the implications of on-going trends but also identify properly new issues emerging to keep pace Seoul with such transitions. This essay-like paper intends to raise some of urban policy issues of managing and planning the mega-city for the twenty first century.

## 2. EMERGING ISSUES

### 1) Motorization vs. Pedestrianization

It is the automobile which has had and will continue to have the most profound impact on the urban environment. In Seoul, each day has witnessed more than

* This paper was originally presented at an international conference(November 1-4, 1994), organized by the Seoul Research Center for the 21st Century at the Seoul Development Institute. The author is grateful for the anonymous referees for their useful comments on the paper.

500 cars increase, despite the high energy costs of private car usage. The advantage of the car affords in terms of great mobility, convenience, and flexibility provides benefit to owner-drivers. But the rapid increase in auto ownership has created serious effects on urban spatial structure. For example, an automobile needs 1,400 square feet, which is equal to the living space of a typical family unit(Smerk, 1960: 80). Rising personal income will allow more extensive private ownership of automobile within a decade or so. People's preference for vehicle size may become larger and larger because the size itself tends to represent a status symbol in Korea. Also there is a tendency that younger generations regard their cars as substitute goods for houses, being frustrated with soaring price of housing in Seoul.

Many vexing problems of the auto-centered metropolitan development are belatedly discovered. In catching up with capital investment demands caused by the increasing number of automobiles, parking facilities as well as road building become an enormous financial burden. Being congested with an ever-increasing flood of cars, the average vehicle speed on major roads dropped noticeably year by year. Supply-sided remedies to solve traffic congestion have generated a vicious circle, according to Anthony Downs' triple convergence principle (1992: 27-28); the more lanes are supplied by road improvement, the more cars pour into streets. Reliance on the auto as the means of transportation would incur social and environrmental costs. It makes disagreeable accidents and noises, contaminating the air, and destroying side walks designed for pedestrians. Another daily nuisance is, what we call, "parking battle" along the narrow street in old built-up areas. The principal difficulty is encountered in case of such emergencies as fire and ambulance services. To date, the aumobile is the conqueror in Seoul, and it will become a dictator sooner or later so far as current car-oriented transport policy persists.

Pedestrians in Seoul have a hard time because so much was done against them. Regular intervals of traffic signals are not long enough particularly for the elderly people. Physical layout is much more difficult to walk about safely. Bus stops and crossings are usually sited a distance away from where people want to be. Pedestrians are forced to cross over bridges and move under subways in order not to slow down traffic flows at busy junctions. There is a widely held presumption that keeping traffic moving is the high priority in transport planning. This is evident in policy decisions about matters like aggregate spending on road construction compared with the trivial amounts spent on provision for pedestrians. Designation of the "pedestrian precinct" should become universally accepted and the exclusion of traffic from busy narrow shopping street should be made. Pedestrianization is a major determinant of the quality of life, even though its impact may be less glamorous, and less prestigious than building roads or bridges. To demonstrate the emanicipation of the pedestrians in Seoul, it is necessary to perform "scrambled crossing" at some of intersections in the CBD during peak hours. Likewise, more

positive programs for pedestrians should be developed to make Seoul a humane city.

### 2) Eclipses of Master Plan

Master plan approach has been introduced to the Korean planning system since the early 1980s. One prominent characteristic of such basic policy plan is to guide urban development consistently over time horizons in the range of 20 years. The official planning documents for most of Korean cities were prepared during last ten years under the control of the Ministry of Construction. The universal experience of master city plan, however, suggested that they were not always implemented as originally laid out, but they were usually more than reports that stayed on file cabinets. The real question faced now is why? Are master city plans themselves useless, or is it the content of the plan? Many planners asserted that comprehensive plan can play a substantive role in urban development by providing a framework within which the market operate and the city government as well.

On the contrary to their expectations and supports, there are some intrinsic drawbacks and inadequacies in implementing end-state master plan as follows:

① It cannot successfully incorporate non-physical realities of political, economic, and social change;
② Its content is so idealized that the problems of short-term government operations cannot be tackled;
③ It tends to function independently and separately with politics and the administrative process;
④ It is conceived as unloved inflexible printed materials, regardless of rapidly changing urban conditions;
⑤ It is not formally linked with budgeting nd institutional settings, partly because of its weak statutory status.

It is undeniable, however, that the failure of this type of macro-scale planning is related to a change in planning paradigm from blueprint-planning from above to micro-scale planning from below.

In addition, the central government's sectionalism would exacerbate the situation; the Ministry of Transportation had already set out a comprehensive urban tranport plan which were almost equivalent to another master plan. The coordination between these two plans does not seem an easy task, and thus land use and transportation scheme cannot go hand-in-hand. Fallacies of master city plan were more aggravated by ad hoc legal provisions; because of critical shortage of housing in Seoul, the central government corporations was able to proceed their development projects without due considerations to the guidelines of the master plan. More importantly, lack of manpower for planning administration was another institutional barrier to fruitful achievement of the master plan. From 1995, for the first time in planning history, the government has opened up low-ranking office positions for city planners. It is undeniable however that the failure of this type of macro-scale planning is related to a change in planning paradigm from blueprint-planning from above to micro-scale planning from below.

### 3) Micro Land Use Control

To begin with, two ways of development control at micro-scale worth mentioning here: One is traditional land use zoning, and the other is urban design which generally occupies a middle position between architecture and urban planning.

There seems to be at least several problems inherent in zoning system itself however. First, the straightfoward zoning regulations does little to make development happen or phase it over time. Second, conventional zoning does not adapt easily to the encouragement of mixed land use. Third, uniform application of zoning system across the nation results in the cityscapes without making any unique features of individual city. As yet, the main regulatory tool for development control in Seoul is zoning. But it tends to follow the existing land use changes rather than guide or determine them. For example, the areal size of land use districts (e.g. residential, commercial, and industrial categories) is too big to achieve all the planning objectives of density, coverage, volume, height, and so on. What we urgently need is micro-level land use planning in which the urban designer can operate. In this respect, the 1991 revision of City Planning Act provided a legal framework, namely Unified Design District Plan(alike to B-Plan in Germany) which is detailed enough for the selected parts of urban area, to take urban design elements into account.

By doing this, land use controls available to the urban designer include not only Euclidean zoning but also a variety of new techniques such as Planned Unit Development(PUD), Incentive Zoning, and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). The purpose of latter is to introduce 'flexibility' to the basic zoning background. Put it another way, the planner's job is to be flexible in applying planning standards when negotiating with the private developers. "Development by agreement" is expected to become a catchphrase in the near future. The decision-making over the shape, size, and location of buildings will be a matter of public amenity and open to interested members of the district in proper. In such circumstances, undertaking citizen participation and consultation, so as to reach a consensus, are important aspect of good planning practice.

In reality, the real estate market play a particularly prominent role in the allocation of land use. Under the name of urban renewal and rebuilding, high-rise apartment house blocks are being built here and there. The power of capital is excercised to create the city as a profit-maximizing machine(Short, 1989). It seems nearly criminal to obliterate the beautiful mountain view corridors in Seoul. Many planners, and even ordinary people advised against this form of development, i.e. vertical sprawl. Aesthetic control on the skyline and conservation of historic areas will be mandatory in order not to make Seoul a high-rise wilderness. Also a number of questions should be asked regarding the consequences of widespread replacement of old dwellings with multi-family housing units. The added population have contributed to traffic congestion, lack of parking lots and

open space, overcrowded schools, overloaded water supply and sewage, and thus a general lessening of the area's quality of life.

On the other hand, the concept of mixed land use has come to the fore of land use planning. A central tenent of the Western urban planning is the separation of workplace from home, generating costly movement. First, environmental groups on nowadays question the 'greeness' of separation, which necessitate the increasing use of the automobile. Second, from a womenization viewpoint of land use, such zoning is most inconvenient for women workers who seek to combine children and workplace. Third, due to advanced telecommunication technology in the 21st century, it may be possible more work to be home-based and neighborhood-based. To minimize much of the need for commuting energy, mix of urban activities would seem more preferable. However, planner's arguments have been ignored; mix of urban functions and space usage is the fundamental characteristics of Korean culture.

4) Citizen Participation

With the advent of local autonomy in Korea, city planners increasingly come across such expressions as decentralization of the government power, the dissemination of planning information, and more frequently, participation by the public. Citizen participation should be conceived not only as an alternative to the conventional top-down planning process pursued by the planning authorities but also as a "decision-forming" partnership for urban governance.

In the realm of urban management and planning, it is of critical importance to recognize that people differ in what they want, and what in fact they do get as taxpayers. Questions are raised about the traditional planning process which is based on the idea that planners know best. For example, widespread dissatisfaction is expressed now among Seoul citizens with the lack of parks and open space, recreational facilities, and air pollution. There are drawbacks, however, in what is called "planning with people." Delaying decision through protracted public hearings and enquires may cost money and time. Opponents to public involvement have also claimed that citizens concerned only with their ownq needs and ignoring the community needs. Therefore, high standards of professional skill are required to put people's participation into operation.

In recent years, thorny problems have been involved in locating some of the basic urban infrastructures. Typical examples are night-soil and sewage treatment plants, solid and liquid waste disposal sites, and incinerator. The people were extremely reluctant, resisting against accommodating the so-called LULU or "noxious facilities" in their neighborhoods. The reasons are many. They were concerned about the risk of bad ordours, dirts, water pollution, and traffic congestion caused by heavy trucks. Moreover, the community image is apt to be spoiled, and eventually result in declining property values. This was particularly true in the case of establishing public cemeteries and crematoria.

Despite the current legal provisions for citizen participation there is still a need for detailed policy guidelines such as ballot box if necessary to resolve such conflicting situations. First, so far as most of the sanitation facilities require metropolitan operations, the decision for location should be negotiated among the related local municipalities. Second, the planning process of "persuasion and negotiation" with people is to be mandatory, including proper compensation for the affected community. Sometimes, the government should propose substantial incentives (e.g. community parks and sports facilities) based upon a "give and take" strategy.

5) Metro-Wide Management

Within the context of urban management functions in Seoul, administrative boundaries no longer possess a rigid separateness. Too many urban services spill over their jurisdictions; transportation, electric power, water supply, and contamination of air pay no attention to local political borders. The followings are some of controversial issues that catch policy attentions:

① Coordination of metropolitan transportation networks;
② Location of region-wide public facilities(e.g. garbage and solid waste disposal site);
③ Allocation of new towns containing industrial and housing estates;
④ Environmental conservation for the Han River

Thus a metro-wide planning system ought to eventually fit into a wider regional management framework.

A couple of approaches can be developed to handle the problems of providing urban infrastructures. Some public facilities have become too expensive and extensive for individual municipalities to operate. For this reason, Seoul has continued to expand, annexing surrounding territory. In this case, the city government may enjoy larger areal coverage, broad tax base, and economies of scale. Otherwise, separate municipalities must maintain each facilities and equipment used only occasionally.

Along with the rapid growth of Seoul and its outlying suburbs, another approach may call for delegation to a new federated local government whose functions cover the metropolitan area as a whole. But a third approach can be taken by intergovernmental agreements to provide essential services under contract such as water supply. This is a coordinating machinary, similar to a "metropolitan council of governments," which relies on formal or informal cooperation according to various arrangements between Seoul and neighboring satellite cities. In this way, they have coped efficiently with the region-wide problem of accumulating waste by sharing a common land-fill site.

Finally, the most important aspect of region-wide planning and management will be "environmental protection." Mounting problems of air and water pollution will gradually become a source of intergovernmental dispute or intercommunity conflicts. The quality of intergovernmental relations--that is, the extent of cooperation and coordination between the various levels of government--stands as a big question mark for the 21st century.

6) Infrastucture Provisions and Maintenance

Urban infrastructure is the most strategic element in metropolitan growth and perhaps the most amenable to planning efforts. Also it is by the provision of infrastructure that the city government has to intervene in the working of the urban economy. For political and financial reasons, top priority has been given to satisfying infrastructure demand in Seoul. However, land compensation costs compose the lion's share of total investment due to high land prices. Since the early 1990s the central government has adopted, what we call, "the public concept of land" of which main aim is to prevent land speculation and to stabilize land prices. At the same time, a comprehensive landholding tax has been levied supplementing capital gains tax with the aid of nation-wide computerized information system.

Very recently, the Seoul city governmentqr announced five ambitious mega-projects for the 21st century to accommodate such global infrastructures as teleport, convention centers, smart buildings, office parks, and high-tech industrial complex, etc. But the question remains as to whether such huge investment to cope with the borderless economy can be realized without imposing a great financial burden for the city government. One of ideal solutions seems to be "advance acquisition" of land reserves, enabling the city government to control effectively the future direction and character of urban development. The other is a method attracting private firms and developers to carry out infrastructure works by public-private partnerships as described later.

On the other hand, the stock of infrastructure built during the rapid economic expansion of the 1960s and 1970s began to deteriorate seriously. On October 21, 1994, we encountered with a kind of great planning disasters in Seoul. A 48-meter section of the 1,160 meter-long Songsu Bridge aged only 15 years, one of the busiest among 17 Han River bridges, collapsed during the morning rush hour. With proper maintenance, most of steel bridges would last for centuries. This shocking and shameful incident culiminates in our professional self-reflection on infrastructure provison and maintenance. There are three basic causes of bridge deterioration and failure; poor maintenance, poor design(or overuse), and accidents. It should be also remembered that, an American engineer once said, a bridge is the embodyment of the efforts of human heads and hearts and hands.

Even in the United States, each year more than 100 minor bridges collapses; killing approximately 12 people(Rainer, 1990: 128). But there are preventive and efficient maintenance programs to maximize the life of bridges and reduce long-term costs. So fas as the persisting problems of contracting, construction, and operation of public works are concerned in Korea, any hindsight review would not be enough. The city government should initiate inspection, repair, and replacement if necessary. This accident will become a turning point to receive national attention on the importance of infrastructure maintenance as well as construction itself, not

to mention about the foreseeable results of government's "the sooner the better" policy.

### 7) Sustainable Development

Sustainability is a keyword that became significant in development discourse in the 1990s. Development and its synonym, 'economic growth' was reappraised because it undermined ecological stability, and it destroyed peole's livelihoods. In the market economy, the organization principle for relating to nature is the maximization of profit and capital accumulation (Cooper and Palmer, 1992: 190). Seoul, as one of mega-cities, has been a massive consumer of resources and has generated many forms of waste and pollution. Urban activities involving transport, the heating of buildings, and the fuelling of production processes contribute to global warming. There is a growing public concern for the urban environment and 'green' issues. The government is under pressure to reinforce emission control. The planners are asked to behave like environmental watchdogs and to design land use pattern based on "Compact City" concept. In the future, the use of telecommunication will be able to substitute some travel and the information technology will be applied to conserve materials and energy.

As with the urban environment itself, the impact of Seoul's growth upon the surrounding countryside is tremendous. Excessive demands of Seoul dwellers for leisure and recreation, generate many social problems in the countryside. Resort buildings for well-to-do families as well as golf courses require lots of land consumption, and whose construction causes apparently environmental disruption. Even tourists and visitors left behind a great amount of rubbish in rural areas. Space-eating by graveyards is another visible nuisances. At present, there exists a total area of 61.8㎢ occupied by private tombs and public cemeteries in the neighboring Kyonggi province.

As years being passed, complete new generations will be rising whose hometowns are not rural areas. They do not have any ties with localities, as being educated and grown up in Seoul since their births. Social repercussions on the future urban life will be great since their perceptions of the nature are very limited. Juvenile delinquency and violence may be increased without special care. This is why it is so important to provide them as many opportunities as possible to have a good access to rural areas.

### 8) Urban Information System (UIS)

In the information age, the implementation of an urban information system is not a collection of data especially assembled for planning purpose only. It should keep the records of the city government's day-to-day operations, which is continuously and automatically updated. Hence the UIS will dramatically change the data base of urban management and planning. More sophisticated forecasting and simulation will become feasible, including urban development games in which players representing real world actors such as land owners, developers, and real-estate agents. If such models could be linked to-

gether and connected to the real-time urban data base, they could be routinely used for various short-term troubleshooting. In particular, the UIS is also a useful tool for grass-roots democracy not only by detecting subtle signals of citizen's dissatisfaction but also by monitoring consistently citizen's needs for urban services via multi-media networks.

Through making use of advanced information technology, such as Geographic Information System(GIS), we can enter the stage of "city automation"; early warning system designed for disaster prevention, pollution control, operation of transportation facilities and utilities, and maintenance of urban infrastractures could be possible. Suppose M. Branch's image of city planning center (1981: 140-158). The planners will be comparable to the key operator controlling the smooth functioning of a power station. His role is to supervise the UIS as planning support system, waiting for sensor lights to flash on a giant map at places where trouble is likely to emerge.

### 9) Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

Privatization is the transfer of assets and service functions from public to private hands. The principal reason is that government is too big, too expensive and less responsive to economic and social changes (Savas, 1982). Despite strong criticism against turning public services into a commodity for distribution on the market, a profit-making, more market-oriented emphasis has been applied to urban management techniques. Examples include solid waste collection and disposal, parking lot and garage operation, and urban transportation. A nation-wide study of 1,400 communities in the United States found that private refuse collectors are about 30 percent less costly than public counterparts. Another case study concluded that average operating
costs of water produced is 25 percent lower when water is produced privately than when it is produced publicly (Hanke, 1987: 82-83).

Along the same line of thought, PPP has come into the mainstream of urban development since the 1980s. In short, PPP means cooperation among the public and private sectors, and it is very similar to the Third Sector concept prevailing now in Korea. Many variants of partnership exist, but the common pattern is for the public sector such as development corporations, to assemble land by compulsory purchase to provide necessary infrastructure and financial incentives (e.g. tax concessions). The private sector partners typically provide the bulk of the finance, the design and technical skills, undertakes the actual construction works and takes the lead in marketing the development. Given that the public sector has often blamed for delaying development through excessive bureaucracy or an unwillingness to dispose of its own land, PPP can be seen as an effective way of speeding development.

Due to the central government's containment policy on the primate city during last 30 years, the Seoul city government has little experience of promoting economic development at local level. Besides, almost all of large-scale urban development have been monopolized by cen-

tral government corporations. The active role of private developers has not been encouraged to participate in public works (e.g. industrial parks) until recent years. With the ongoing trends of decentralizing the government power over land use control, more diversified methods of joint urban development including PPP should be explored so that they can better meet the needs of the local market.

## 3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As described previously, the emerging policy issues would seem very challenging and complicated even though they are not necessarily exhausitive. Among others, the prospective role of the planners must be in transition too, and thus deserve our special attention. We experienced to elect the city mayor by popular vote in 1995, envisaging new central-local government relationships. Urban management and planning will become more visible function of the city government. The problem is not simply one of formally decentralized self-governance but above all political powers. The elected mayor will tend to ask the planners to formulate the urban problems meaningfully for him to solve. At the same time, the needs of people will be strongly voiced, encouraging their active participation in the decision-making process. Conflicting situations among various interest groups will be commonplace. So to speak, an era of urban politics is just around the corner. This is why the process of "bargaining" and "compromise" will become the most crucial issue in urban management and planning of Seoul going ahead in a period of transition.

## References


Argotti, T., 1993, *Metropolis 2000*, New York: Routledge.

Branch, M. C., 1981, *Continuous City Planning*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Cooper, D.F. and J. A. Palmer, 1992, *The Environment in Question*, London:Routledge.

Downs, Anthony, 1992, *Stuck in Traffic*, Washington D. C.: The Brookings Institution.

Hanke, S.H. (ed.), 1987, *Privatization and Development*, San Francisco:International Center for Economic Growth.

Kivell, Philip, 1993, *Land and the City*, London : Routledge.

Rainer, George, 1990, *Understanding Infrastrubcture*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Savas, E. S., 1982, *Privatizing the Public Sector*, Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers.

Short, J. R., 1989, *The Humane City*, Oxford: Basil Blachwell.

Smerk, G. M. (ed.), 1968, *Reading in Urban Transportation*, Bloomington:Indiana University Press.

Tolley, R. (ed.), 1990, *The Greening of Urbban Transport*, London: Belhaven Press.

Trench, S. and T. Oc (eds.), 1990, *Current Isbsues in Planning*, Hants: Gower Publishing.


## ABSTRACT


This paper intends to raise some of urban policy issues of managing and planning Seoul for the twenty first century. As one of the world's most dynamic mega-cities, Seoul is faced with at least two trends: one is globalization of the economy, and the other is humanization of urban development in relation to people's quality of life. Given this context, there are emerging issues in a time of transition as the following; pedestrianization, decline of city master plan, micro land use control, citizen involvement, metro-wide management, infrastructure provisions and maintenance, sustainable development, urban information system, and public-private partnership.